

**TOWN OF GRANBY
PUBLIC INPUT AND INFORMATIONAL SESSION
REGARDING HOLCOMB FARM
MINUTES
JUNE 4, 2012**

First Selectman John E. Adams called the session to order at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT: John Adams, Ronald Desrosiers, Sally King, B. Scott Kuhnly, Mark Neumann, and William F. Smith, Jr., Town Manager

OTHERS PRESENT: Holcomb Farm- William Bentley and James Lofink

First Selectman Adams asked Town Manager Smith and William Bentley to give an overview of Holcomb Farm activities. Topics that may be discussed: financial duties, building a relationship, change in the grant structure, and farm is an asset for the town and the town is responsible.

Town Manager Smith reviewed the background information. In addition to financial duties, there would be routine maintenance, like mowing, snow plowing, cleaning, and security. It has also been determined that there exists a need for some capital improvements. These concerns are for security, signage, general safety of future use, and for future programs. Town forces are making progress on operations, honoring obligations prior to the transition, and scheduling activities. Calendar updating has transitioned with little interruption and things are coming together. The priority is analyzing and calculating the cost that will keep the farm programs and uses sustainable. The cost may be in the range of \$50,000 - \$100,000 per year. There are also other programs now available including Chi Gong/Yoga on Tuesday mornings and afternoons and a 0-4 year old drop in program. The Memo of Understanding is being reviewed with the Town Attorney and is moving along. Town Manager Smith thanked Jill Ford, James Lofink, and Bill Bentley for their assistance during this transition.

Mr. Bentley recapped the Holcomb Farm activities. Holcomb Farm is a great asset and a great space to hold activities. The financial resources have changed for Holcomb Farm, Inc. (HFI). Since 1999 the Link and Learn Grant had to a large extent sustained the farm and its programs and ended last June 30th. In 2010 the Holcomb Farm Inc. took over the "Fresh Access" program with CSA and will continue to do the same programming. There are new opportunities to improve through grants that will assist in the operations of the Fresh Access program with CSA. The Department of Recreation and Leisure Services has transitioned the scheduling and is retaining a calendar as well. The Memo of Understanding is being looked at and a few points still need to be addressed. The restructuring of the relationship between the town and Holcomb Farm, Inc. will provide a foundation for sustaining current and expanding future community uses at Holcomb Farm.

Other residents attending this session had questions and comments about Holcomb Farm. Some highlights are:

- When asked about any special plans, Town Manager Smith indicated there are no absolute plans. The town's goal is to keep the farm economically sustainable; one way may be by generating more revenues from user activity. This is modeled from the activities currently offered by Recreation and Leisure Services.
- CSA program is at the Holcomb Farm for this year – the future is up in the air.

- Granby Land Trust is renting space and assists with keeping trails open on Holcomb Farm property.
- As a guide on fees, if activities are open to the public, the activities are paid for by the public in general fees. If no organized activities are scheduled, no fees are usually collected.
- Suggestion to offset expenses was to encourage people to donate money to Holcomb Farm to obtain a sticker or a pass so that the people are encouraged to become more active with the farm, such as hiking, cross country skiing, etc. This donation would not be mandatory to participate at the farm.
- An analysis is still being conducted for the cost to run the farm and maintaining the buildings.
- There are no funds from Holcomb Farm Inc. to keep programs running at the farm.
- There are approximately 367 acres of land. Twenty-two acres is for vegetable farming by HFI. HFI has three clients – CSA, beneficiaries from Fresh Access, and a few restaurants. There is approximately 60 to 70 acres for pastures and the rest is woods.
- The main barn and workshop are not used by CSA. CSA is using the farmhouse and annex (the annex is seasonal).
- Suggestion was to lease more of the farm to others so it can be utilized in other ways.
- The town is looking into holding cooking classes – sponsoring fresh produce.
- The CSA is not part of the town's obligations or programming.
- When asked what happened to the Link & Learn grant, it was indicated this grant model ceased to be available. It was suggested to check into opportunities and secure the education grant programs that can be held at Holcomb Farm because they were very successful programs in the past. It was also suggested to bring other towns to Holcomb Farm as previously done. East Granby and East Hartland both showed interest in continued participation of the educational programming.
- The town may be exploring further a summer camp separate from Salmon Brook Park's summer camp and possible transportation to Holcomb Farm to hold programs for education, agriculture, and arts and recreation as part of Salmon Brook Park's summer camp activity offerings.
- Suggestion to bring technology to stream classes to further expand schools' participation in programs that can be taught at the farm.
- Suggestion to link with Suffield's school district's vocational agriculture program.
- Suggestion to have a living history farm. Salmon Brook Historical Society may be a good resource for feedback and assistance.

In closing the public input and informational session, First Selectman Adams thanked everyone who came and made comments. We are working through the transition for building up the farm as a great town asset and a successful farm operation. Discussions about Holcomb Farm will continue.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia I. Chieski